

Missouri Strategic Initiative for Economic Growth

Leaving Too Many Low-Income and Minority Children Behind Academically

Submitted By:

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Need:

In an increasingly competitive global arena, Missouri cannot afford to ignore the academic achievement gap and dropout rate. We must push for increased academic performance of *all* students. High school dropouts are a major fiscal burden to Missouri. High school drop outs are more likely to be periodically unemployed, on government assistance (Garfinkel, I., Kelly, B. & Waldfogel, J. 2005) or commit crime. Students living in low-income families drop out of high school six times the rate of students living in high-income families (U.S. Dept. of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2004). Governor Jay Nixon in his January, 2009 State of the State address said, "Education is the key to our future. From preschool to college, we must prepare every child to compete. We must support our teachers. And we must make the dream of a college education a reality for more Missouri families."ⁱ

Factors affecting student achievement are complex and influenced by many things including the school, teacher, student, and home. Many models have been used focused on the school, the teacher, and the students during the school day. This initiative is focused on increasing low-income and minority parents' meaningful involvement with their students' achievement and with the school in a demonstration project that spans five years.

Significance of the Problem:

Low-income and minority children are achieving at significantly lower levels in school. Black and Hispanic students are dropping out of school at higher rates than Asian or White students.

Data that validates the problem/need:

Child Poverty (those under 18) in Missouri has increased from 15.3% in 2000 to 18.6% in 2008. *In 2008, there were over a quarter of a million (259,017) Missouri children living in poverty.*

Socioeconomic status has been shown through numerous studies to have a strong relationship with a student's academic achievement. Free or reduced price lunch is based on a national standard of income eligibility and is the most commonly used proxy for socioeconomic status in school data.¹ In 2008, 42% of Missouri children were enrolled in free and reduced lunch. This rate increased from 36.5% in 2000. Eighty-six of Missouri's counties have participation rates higher than the state average and in 38 counties the rate is as high as 52.7% - 76%.

¹

As can be seen in the chart below, in Missouri in 2009, over 9 percent of Black students, and 5 percent of Hispanic students in grades 9 – 12, dropped out of school.

Missouri Annual Dropout Rate As a Percent of Total Enrollment Grades 9 - 12

Year	2006	2007	2008	2009
Asian Dropout Rate	1.9	2.4	2.1	2.2
Black Dropout Rate	7.0	6.5	8.0	9.5
Hispanic Dropout Rate	5.5	6.8	5.8	5.0
Indian Dropout Rate	5.9	4.5	3.5	4.9
White Dropout Rate	3.1	3.0	3.0	3.1
Total Dropout Rate	3.9	3.7	4.0	4.3

Source Missouri Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Education as submitted to Core Data November, 2009

Research has demonstrated there is a weak leadership capacity existing in many low-income communities. (Tabb & Montesi 2000; Dubl 1997). Many limited-resource citizens fell ill-prepared for civic life. If low-income citizens are to take action, they need to understand how to relate to others, build commitments, and develop social networks (Day,2001). Leadership development usually begins with capacity building (Kirk & Shuttle, 2004).

Best practices related to the Issue:

- As parent involvement is positively associated with graduation rates,² facilitate involvement of low-income and minority parents.
- As programs and interventions that engage families in supporting their children's learning at home are linked to higher student achievement, facilitate engagement of low-income and minority parents.

Proposed Actions:

This initiative is a five-year project. The first year is devoted to planning. This includes selecting the grades in 8 schools, finding appropriate partners, engaging stakeholders' buy-in, participation, and support, selecting work teams, developing work plans, developing a project schedule, establishing and maintaining a functional database, developing an outline for the four interim and the final report. The second year is devoted to implementation and baseline data collection, with results being tracked from year two to year five.

A cadre of low-income and minority parents will be trained for civic engagement, specifically school engagement. To support the parents, mentoring will be provided by University of Missouri Extension Specialists in their home counties.

- Develop leadership opportunities and capacity of low-income and minority parents for civic engagement, in particular, school engagement.
- Establish vehicles for communication between schools and parents. (Marzano, 2003)
- Develop less traditional and multiple approaches to engaging low-income and minority parents to make a recognized contribution to the school, thereby increasing their ownership stake in the school.

- Establish ways to remove psychological and logistic barriers of parent-teacher conferences.

Resources Necessary:

Personnel per year

Principal Investigator and Evaluator. This person will provide project oversight, organize and evaluate the project. Responsibilities includes data analysis, transcription, and Institutional Review Board Approval as well as assuring that the proposed actions above are completed.

.50 FTE	30,000
Benefits (30.38%)	9,114

Program Coordinator. This person is responsible for the operational facets of the program, including the leadership training.

.25 FTE	15,000
Benefits (30.38%)	4,557

Administrative Assistance. This person will handle details of travel, meeting arrangements and other paperwork.

\$15.30/hour for 15 hours per month X 12 months.	2,754
Benefits (30.38%)	837

General Program Costs per year

Travel to 8 schools for data collection by evaluation team (figured at 260 miles r.t.)	1,040
Food and lodging for 16 days for 2 people by evaluation team	4,224
Travel and meals for planning and monthly meetings for 6 work team members	2,480
Program Supplies and Materials	445
Communication (Telephone, Fax, Postage, and Coping, Computer conferencing)	620

Data Collection, Analysis and Reporting Per Year for Year 2, 3, 4 & 5

Analysis and Reporting	27,180
Parent and Participant Surveys	19,335
MAP Analysis	16,420
On-site focus groups in 8 schools	9,600

Leadership/Civic Engagement Training for Parents Per Year

Travel for 32 participants to 2.5 day training	4,160
Travel and one meal for 32 participants for .5 day focus group	4,382
Travel for 8 Mentors plus 2 visits per mentor to participant teams for follow-up	2,790
Training Materials	1,680
Food and Lodging for 40 for 2.5 days for training	11,200

Participate in National Evaluation Meeting to report results (Year 5)

Year 1 Total	71,070
Year 2 Total	96,747
Year 3 Total	96,747
Year 4 Total	96,747
Year 5 Total	98,473
Grand Total for 5 year commitment	<u>459,785</u>

Immediate and Long-range Benefits and Methods to Measure Performance:

- Improved student achievement of students receiving free and reduced lunch.
Method to Measure Performance: Analyze and report student and classroom level MAP data disaggregated by the special characteristic, free and reduced lunch.
- Improved engagement of low-income and minority parents and the schools.
Method to Measure Performance: Analyze and report MSIP Parent Advance Questionnaire disaggregated by minority status and annual income on the following questions:
 - My involvement in my child's education has improved his/her performance.
 - I talk to my child's teacher.
 - I attend parent teacher conferences
 - I visit the school
 - I help with school activities.
- Improved communication between low-income and minority parents and school officials.
Method to Measure Performance: Focus groups of low-income and minority parents and focus groups of school officials.
- Low-income and minority parents are more knowledgeable about the achievement gap, will increase conversation about the achievement gap in the community, and increase ownership in the issue of the achievement gap.
Method to Measure Performance: Leadership training and deliberative dialogue training end-of-session questionnaires, and follow-up surveys.
- Expectations of low-income and minority parents will include post-secondary education for their children.
Method to Measure Performance: Question to be included on MSIP parent Advance Questionnaire.

Endnotes

¹State of the State Address, January 27, 2009,
http://governor.mo.gov/newsroom/speeches/2009/2009_Missouri_State_of_the_State_Address.htm.

²To qualify for free lunch, family income must be at or below 130% of poverty. Family incomes between 130% and 185% of poverty qualify for reduced-price lunch. In FY09, 130% of poverty for a family of four was \$27,560. Source:
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/lunch/AboutLunch/NSLPFactsheet.pdf>.

³Barnard, W., 2004. Parent involvement in elementary school and educational attainment. *Children and Youth Services Review*. 26, pp. 39-62.
